

**UNIVERSITY OF MASSACHUSETTS LOWELL
CENTER FOR LOWELL HISTORY
ORAL HISTORY COLLECTION**

**SHIFTING GEARS PROJECT
NORTH ADAMS**

**INFORMANT: WILLIAM J. STACKPOLE
INTERVIEWER: ROBERT GABRIELSKY
DATE: FEBRUARY 21, 1989**

**R = ROBERT
W = WILLIAM**

SG-NA-T044

R: This is Robert Gabrielsky interviewing William Stackpole for the Shifting Gears Project. It is February 21st, 1989 and we're interviewing Mr. Stackpole at his home in Williamstown.

Where were you born?

W: [Coughs] Williamstown.

R: When?

W: 1909.

R: Umhm. Where were your grandparents from?

W: My mother was from Ireland and my father was from Gibraltar.

R: So you have no recollection of your grandparents?

W: My?

R: Not your parents, your grandparents.

W: Oh my grandparents, oh! Uh, not really.

R: Umhm. Uh, did you, did you have any people who were older than your parents, like a generation older than your parents that were part of your life when you were very young, when you were a little boy.

W: None that I recall. [Coughs]

R: Uh huh. Uh, what are your earliest memories?

W: That's hard to say.

R: Well it doesn't have to be (--) You know, just something that sticks out in your mind when you were very very young.

W: I can't recollect. [Chuckles]

R: Nothing in particular, okay, okay. Where did you go to school?

W: Williamstown.

R: Uh huh, in the public school system?

W: Public schools.

R: Uh huh. Uh, and how far did you go in school?

W: I went uh, senior year. Then I dropped out and went to [Bliss?] Business College in North Adams.

R: Uh huh, uh huh. Um, what was, what was your first job? Your very first job?

W: I think the first job I had was with my brother. He ran the fraternities at Williams.

R: Uh huh. What did he, what did he, what did he do exactly?

W: He was manager of the fraternities.

R: For food services?

W: For food services.

R: Uh huh, so you worked getting food together?

W: Yes. [R: Uh huh] Waiting on tables, you know, all that incidentals.

R: Uh huh. You could move from fraternity to fraternity?

W: Right.

R: How old were you when you did that?

W: Probably eighteen.

R: Uh huh, uh huh. Um, [W: coughs] did you, or do you go to church?

W: I did go to church, yes.

R: Uh huh. Where did, where did you go to church?

W: St. Patrick's Church.

R: Where was that?

W: Williamstown.

R: Uh huh, uh huh. Um, what, what did your parents do for a living? What did your father do, or did your mother work?

W: My father was a superintendent at Sandsprings Bottling Works over here [R: Uh huh] in Williamstown. [R: Uh huh] Uh, my mother was uh, well she died quite young. Uh, she was just a house, you know, a house wife.

R: Uh, how many brothers and sisters do you have?

W: [Coughs] Oh wait a minute now. They're all dead now. John, (--) Jan! [Jan: Yeah!] How many brothers and sisters [laughs]?

R: You had a big family.

W: They had a big (--) [Jan: How many do you have? You?] Huh? [Jan: You don't have anymore!] I'm not talking about now. [Jan: Oh] I was talking about when, I mean how many? [Jan: Three brothers and two sisters]. Seven.

R: Three brothers and two sisters?

W: Yeah.

R: Uh huh. That's five. Um, you worked for your brother then. Did you work for your brother at the same time you were going to business college?

W: Uh, some of the time, yes.

R: Uh huh. And how long did you go, did you go there in North Adams? Was that a year course, or two years?

W: Yeah, I went about six months. I dropped out.

R: Uh huh. Uh huh. And then what did you do after that?

W: I went to work for uh, Treadway Inns. It was there in Williamstown, but they had branches, hotels all over.

R: Uh huh. Is there still a Treadway Inn here in Williamstown?

W: No, they've changed the name now, but it was, it was, the Williams Inn was the (--)

R: The Williams Inn was a Treadway Inn.

W: Right. [Coughs]

R: And what, what did you do for that?

W: I was Head Bell Man.

R: Uh huh, here in Williamstown?

W: Yeah. Well I traveled other places too. [R: Uh huh] I think the last place I worked was in Dearborn, Michigan, Ford's.

R: They moved you all around.

W: Yes.

R: Uh huh. So you were, you were pretty high in the company then that they would move you around to do, in that position to do something like that?

W: Yes.

R: Umhm.

W: And that was the last, I said the last place I worked was at Dearborn in Dearborn, Michigan.

R: Dearborn, Michigan, Henry Ford's town.

W: [Unclear] I was out there during the sit-down strikes.

R: Oh yeah! In 36 and 37 that was, right? [W: Yes] Yeah. Um, and uh, then well what brought you back to [W: coughs] Williamstown and North Adams?

W: I got fed up with the hotel chain. It was a beautiful job. I loved it when you're roaming around, but finally I wanted to settled down and get out of it. Uh, (--)

R: It's nice when you're young.

W: It was a good life. Oh well if I were to do it over again I'd go right back into it of course.

R: Uh huh. But when you decided you wanted to have a family, or something like that (--)

W: That's right, I got out.

R: Uh huh. Uh, what was your work like there? What did you do? What was the actual process of work for Treadway, for being a Head Bell Man. What does it mean to be a Head Bell Man?

W: Uh, well you have charged of all the other Bell Men, all depending on the size of the hotel.

R: So you're a supervisor or the foreman? And so (--)

W: Right, right, that's what it amounted to. You have to inspect them and all.

R: Make sure everybody looked the part.

W: Everybody dressed, you know, and review. [R: Uh huh] Just generally oversee them. Also chip, you know, do it myself when it was that busy.

R: Do you go to hotels much anymore? Do you go to hotels much anymore as a guest?

W: Not too (--). Not as a guest, no. No.

R: Uh, do you ever go like, go to hotel restaurants, or anything like that?

W: Oh and we go to the Williams Inn, [R: Uh huh] or over at the Orchard's.

R: Uh huh. Uh, have you noticed, do you think that the hotels, or the nature of work in hotels has changed since you were a young man, since you were a Bell Man?

W: Probably not that much.

R: Uh huh.

W: I don't think they uh (--)

R: I get the impression, I get the impression that they were fancier back then maybe.

W: Well that's right, they were much more formal. [R: Uh huh] They're much more informal now. [R: Uh huh] The waitresses and all do this you know (--). [Coughs] I've got a tickling in my throat.

R: Do you want to stop and get something to drink?

W: No, that's all right. Will you have something to drink?

R: No thank you. Um, so you got tired of the job because you wanted to settle down so you chose to come back to, you're family was here I take it.

W: Yeah, umhm.

R: And then what? Then what did you do? You came back here in 37 I guess, or 38? [W: Yeah] Uh huh, and then what did you do?

W: Let's see. I worked in a restaurant then on Spring Street in Williamstown and went to Drury.

R: What, as a waitress, or a waiter, or?

W: No, a short order. [R: Uh huh] We did a little of everything there. [R: Uh huh] [Coughs] Then uh, let's see. [Pauses] Then was coming on the time (--) Let's see, during the war I first went to Hartford. I went to Drury Trade School at night.

R: So you, so basically until uh, from about 37 or 38 until the war started you were working in this restaurant. [W: Right] Uh huh, and then you started going to a Trade School at night.

W: Right, Drury Trade School, North Adams.

R: Uh huh.

W: Uh, there were offered jobs I went to.

R: What were you taking, what were you studying there?

W: Um, machine work, you know, tools. [R: Umhm] From there I went to Hartford. Now the war was coming up [R: Uh huh] I worked the Hartford Machine and Screw in Hartford. And then of course I had started the family. I had the family too then. [R: Yeah] Uh, oh there was the danger of getting locked it. I remember during the war you couldn't move.

R: You mean, you mean in your position?

W: Yeah, you couldn't move from one plant to another. [R: Uh huh] You were frozen on the job. Well there was that threat. So my family was back here and I was in Hartford and I couldn't see (--)

R: You didn't know what was going to happen?

W: No. So I knew the president of the company I worked for uh, very well.

R: So what were you there, a machinist, or a machine center?

W: Machinist.

R: You were a machinist?

W: And so I transferred to the General Electric in Pittsfield.

R: When was this? This was during the war?

W: During the war.

R: Do you remember what year?

W: About 1943 I think. About 1943.

R: Uh huh. And what kind of work were you doing? You said you were a machinist. What was the exact nature? Could you describe it to a lay person what you, how you would spend your day down there?

W: You know, you'd turret lathes and um, I don't know how to describe it. We worked on bozooka tubes.

R: Working with metal too. [W: Yeah] Uh huh.

W: Uh, I'm trying to piece it all together. We're going back quite a ways you know.

R: That's my job. [Laughs] Um, okay. So around 43 you were in Pittsfield G.E. [W: right] and you're making uh, they have defense contracts there. You're making (--) [W: Yeah, same as in Hartford] Uh huh, you're making military equipment. Gone into bozooka tubes, that sort of thing. [W: Right, right] It doesn't sound like electronic equipment though?

W: Well it was a combination of a lot of things. [R: Uh huh] It was all on turret lathes and all the rest. You know, machine shop work.

R: Uh huh. So you're over in Pittsfield in 43 working for G.E.

W: Right.

R: How do you end up getting back here?

W: Uh, I didn't like Pittsfield at all. Didn't like the G.E. Didn't like the jobs.

R: What didn't you like about it?

W: [Coughs] Well with the bozooka tubes you're working around formaldehyde and all of that kind of stuff.

R: Bad chemicals.

W: Yeah. [R: Uh huh] Uh, so I was just fed up with the traveling back and forth too. [R: Uh huh] Then I think it was that they cut us down to forty hours or something down there and it wasn't worth my while to go back.

R: How long had you been working?

W: Forty-eight.

R: Umhm, six days a week?

W: Yeah.

R: Six eight hour shifts?

W: So then uh, oh I quit down there. That's when I was eligible to go into the army. I was an A-1 that day. So then I came to Sprague Electric in 44.

R: So but you had a 1-A military classification?

W: At that time after I quit. You were automatically. [Coughs] But I had a family, but I was never, I wasn't called, but I was eligible to be called.

R: So you left G.E. and you came to work for Sprague? And where do you start working for Sprague? What uh?

W: Brown Street.

R: You started working at Brown Street.

W: As a what they call wire coating. There again, machines and but different type.

R: Coating for what, gauge or was this (--)

W: A very fine wire we coated, almost like the hair of your head. [R: Uh huh] Called it wire coating.

R: Uh huh. Uh, and how long did you do that job?

W: Oh, let's see. Probably two or three years.

R: Umhm. What did you do after that?

W: I went to uh, let's see, what department? I went to Beaver Street at that point and then I became an expeditor for [dryelectrolytics?]. Like I said, we called them by several names.

R: Uh huh. At what, at what point did you become involved in the union?

W: In the union? [R: yeah] Almost immediately when I went to Sprague's [chuckles].

R: So that was around 1944 then?

W: Yeah.

R: Um, what was the ICW? What was that like? Was that a uh, did it have a life independent of the company? I mean what sort of things did the union do?

W: Oh yeah, we had a certified contract with the company. [R: Uh huh] Uh, I was in it from the outside, uh, outset of the union. Uh, you know, we had contracts with the company [unclear].

R: Besides negotiating contracts um, was the union engaged in any other kind of activity besides negotiating contracts? Did it have a, did it have a social, were there social activities connected with the union, or anything?

W: Oh yeah. We had our outside meeting room place. I was involved in all kinds of activity stuff in North Adams [R: Uh huh] during that time.

R: Civic activities and that sort of thing?

W: Yeah. Yeah I was (--)

R: Did you live in North Adams then, or did you live in Williamstown?

W: No, in Williamstown. [R: Uh huh] I was head of the blood bank for about fifteen years, Red Cross. [R: Uh huh] [Coughs - long pause] I think I'll get a drink of water. Will you excuse me?

R: Oh yes, that would be a good idea.

W: Sure I can't get you something?

R: Uh, what I was thinking about is how many, how many people were actively involved in the union when you were first involved? I know that there were several thousand people working for the company at it's, it peaked I think at about 4400.

W: About 4400.

R: But how many people like uh, how often did you have union meetings for example?

W: Once a month.

R: Once a month. They were membership meetings, or executive workers.?

W: Oh yeah. No, both. [R: Uh huh] Both.

R: And typically you know, typically how many people would come to uh, to a meeting like that?

W: Oh we'd have a packed hall.

R: Well how big is the hall?

W: Uh, well we'd have probably two or three hundred [R: uh huh, uh huh] at our meetings.

R: Uh huh. Did you have uh, did you have regular offices? Did the union have its own offices, or did you rent space?

W: We rented space.

R: Uh huh. Where did you usually have your meetings?

W: At uh, well we use to be at the Lafayette club. Then we were dissatisfied with that and went to the American Legion.

R: Uh huh. The same American Legion that's still up there by American Legion Drive there?

W: Yeah, oh yeah. Then the Eagle, we were at the Eagle for a long time. So we changed around some.

R: Um hm. Can you think of anybody who was, besides yourself, who was active in the ICW who might still be around? [W: Oh yeah] Uh, I'd be interested in talking to other people who were in the ICW too.

W: Yeah, there's Andy [name unclear] from North Adams. [R: Uh huh] There's Louie Floriani from Greylock. There's still, several of them have died. Uh, those are two I can remember [few words unclear].

R: Uh, okay. Are you in contact with any of these people at all, or?

W: Not often. I meet them once in awhile. [R: Uh huh] As a matter of fact Andy called me a couple of weeks ago about something.

R: Uh huh, uh huh. Um, what kind of uh (--) So you had these well attended membership meetings and executive board meetings and you negotiated contracts regularly with the uh, with the company. Um, when you, when you first got involved my uh, according to my research the ICW was active at Sprague from the mid-30's, that is before you got there. I mean so were you

aware of this, that you (--)

W: Yeah, that was, that was ICW #1. [R: Uh huh] We became ICW #2.

R: So you actually formed, you were actually in on the formation of ICW #2.

W: Of uh, right. I was [R: you were] at the origination of the (--)

R: Do you remember when that was?

W: That was around (--)

R: Early, right when you first came right? [W: Yeah] Around 44.

W: About 44. [R: Yeah] It was a, well, the UECIO then [R: Yeah, umhm] uh, were trying to get in. That's how I got involved in it then. [R: Uh huh] We had many unions trying to get in Sprague's.

R: Yeah, do you think that uh, in those days and this is right towards the end of the war and uh, do you think that from your remembering and your perception was the UE very aggressively trying to get into Sprague?

W: Oh yes!

R: Were there a lot of UE sympathizers, or a substantial amount of EU sympathizers, or a few, or?

W: Oh yeah, oh yeah we always had that.

R: Uh huh.

W: We had no use for the, we could fight like uh, but the UE to us was a communist dominated outfit. [R: Uh huh] It wasn't a union at all in my opinion.

R: Uh huh, umhm.

W: Uh, as a matter of fact the CIO kicked them out after.

R: Right, sure, right. Umhm. Uh, and that was your (--). Was that your uh, was that your primary criticism of the UE that it was communist?

W: Yeah, [R: Uh huh] mainly. We at one time I think it was, we had six unions trying to get in at one time. [R: Yeah] So we went through an awful lot of stuff with the union. [R: Umhm] I had read their streak of the UE. [R: Yeah] Like Louie [Emspeck?] they were definitely dying to come. As a matter of fact their periodicals, well periodicals in the papers was almost a copy of the daily workers. Even the CIO finally saw through it and kicked them out.

R: Yeah, yeah. Uh, could you describe your relationship to your fellow workers at Sprague? Did you make a lot of friends on the job?

W: Well, maybe not particularly on the job, but as a head, I was the head of the union for over twenty-five years. So I got to know (--) [Chuckles]

R: When did you (--) You became the head of the union when it first came in? When you, you basically organized it in 44 and then (--)

W: Well I, I was in on the tail end of the organization, let's put it that way.

R: Uh huh.

W: As a matter of fact I was elected chairman I think when I first went to Sprague's of the ICW #2. [R: Umhm] So I hope I ran for election every year and every three years when we changed that thing and I always, I never lost in elections, never. So I made friends I guess. Probably make enemies too. You do in a union.

R: Surely, surely. Um, but so, but you would say that most of your friends on the job were through your union activity, not necessarily you know, who you worked next to.

W: No. Oh we were all good friends on the job too.

R: Uh huh, uh huh. Uh, could you describe your relationship to your bosses at Sprague and your feelings about the company?

W: Well we had our ups and downs. Uh, there were bad times and there were good times, but it leveled off pretty much so that uh, we could negotiate contracts and police them every day. And things were fine that way.

R: Uh, can you describe your working conditions at Sprague at that time and your feelings about them? That is I'm not talking, for example you raised why you left G.E., because you had these formaldehydes. Can you describe what the working conditions were like at Sprague? How you felt about them?

W: Well I thought by and large the working conditions were excellent. [R: Uh huh, uh huh] As a matter of fact we use to call it a country club. [R: Uh huh] Things changed over a period of years of course, but generally I wouldn't have any complaint with that.

R: Um, what kind of um, besides these monthly membership meetings did the union have any other kind of social life or anything? Did it do anything besides that, or did it mostly [unclear]?

W: Well we had clambakes and that type of thing. [R: Uh huh, uh huh] Some of the members like myself, we went into a lot of civic activities. I was with the Red Cross, United Fund, Budget Committee of the United Fund. [R: Uh huh] Then I was Chairman of the Berkshire County Red

Cross Blood Bank.

R: Uh huh. Were you, (--) That's a lot of civic work. Did you, were you involved in any kind of political activity at all?

W: Not too much.

R: Uh huh. Uh huh.

W: I belonged to the Democratic Town Committee in Williamstown at that time and the Lion's Club, but I didn't get in too much involved with North Adams.

R: Um, probably with all of those civic organizations that absorbed a lot of your time while on the job. [W: Oh yeah!] Did you do anything else?

W: You mean outside? [Chuckles]

R: Yeah, I mean how did you (--) Let me put it this way. How did you like, maybe that's the way you like to spend your time off the job. Maybe that's the way you did spend your time off the job, but how did you spend your time off the job and how did you like to spend your time off the job? Was it mostly with the civic activities?

W: Yeah.

R: Yeah. Umhm. Um, I think that your evaluation of the UE is not something that anybody can argue with. I mean it's just that they're historical. It's an historical fact. [W: Yeah] Uh, but what are your feelings about the IUE and when that came in? And what is your perception of what happened there when the IUE defeated the ICW, or maybe you don't think it did? I don't know.

W: Yeah it did.

R: Uh huh. What are your feelings about it and what do you think happened?

W: Well I know what happened. [R: Okay] I'm sure of what happened. I lost my voice. [R: Uh huh] I had just been elected for another term. I lost my voice then.

R: So you feel you weren't physically capable of putting up a fight?

W: I couldn't even answer the phone. [R: Uh huh] I tried to negotiate with the company, couldn't, so they took full advantage of that. So I wasn't even a factor in it. I resigned. I had to. I had to go to Boston and have an operation.

R: Uh huh. Well what are your feelings about the IUE coming in and replacing the ICW as an independent union?

W: I don't think it was any improvement. [R: Uh huh] I'm sure it wasn't. I had a lot of dealings with the IUE when they were in Pittsfield, when I was in Pittsfield. [R: Uh huh] And I didn't think too much of the organization then and I still don't. I don't think they're effective. [R: Uh huh] But that's a matter of opinion.

R: Uh, certainly they were, they would probably (--) There's one thing that they would agree with you on is your evaluation of the UE probably. [Chuckles]

W: Oh I'm sure they would. If they read the history of the UE they certainly would.

R: Well I mean that's how they started was basically fighting the UE. So.

W: Yeah, they came in to being when I was out in Detroit. [R: Uh huh].

R: Uh, what (--) In addition to negotiating a contract, were there any issues of grievances during the life of the contract while you were in the union? I mean did grievances ever come up?

W: Oh! [Laughs] We lived on grievances. Yeah. Uh, you not only sign a contract you've got to police it. [R: Uh huh] The biggest job is policing them. [R: Uh huh] So we were, I was right out straight for years following grievances.

R: What kind of grievances were typical? I mean is there something that sort of stands out in your mind and saying oh, we had a lot of these kinds of grievances or something?

W: Well work related for the most part. Rates on jobs and the bonus system and all of that. You had a lot. But that went on every day. We had a lot of people and we had several plants to service.

R: Uh huh, right.

W: We had to police the contract and that meant grievances every day of the week, lots of them.

R: And was there a stewards system? [W: Oh yeah] I mean how would the grievances, how would the grievances come to your attention?

W: [Coughs] Through the steward system. [R: In other words] They had a representative in each department.

R: In other words the first thing that would happen is that somebody would call their steward and then it would (--)

W: And then it would come off to us.

R: And then it would move up to the steps, right.

W: Yeah.

R: Um, when you were active in the union, when you got active in the union what percentage of your working day or working week was spent on union activity? Was it a 100%, 50%, 20, you know.

W: No. Probably 75%.

R: Yeah uh. So that 25% of the time you'd be working for the company you'd be doing your assigned job [W: right, right] and then the rest, what? Would you get lost time or would you get uh (--) How were you compensated when you were doing union business? Did that come out of the union treasury or did the company pay for you?

W: No, that went on with the job like all of them. They do the same thing. With the IUE does the same thing. That's part of the job, part of your contract to service it.

R: Uh huh.

W: So it was just on as your work day with the company.

R: Uh huh, uh huh. I see, I see. Um, this is um, sort of uh, outside of you know, since you (--) When? How long? You retired then in 69 or 67, or 70? What time did you (--)

W: 74.

R: 74 you retired. But the IUE came in, I thought the IUE came in around 67 or 68, right?

W: In that area, right.

R: Yeah. So that you were hospitalized for awhile and then went back to work [W: right] and then retired. Um, this is quite a bit after you retired, but uh, how do you feel about uh, how do you feel about Sprague pulling out of Marshall Street, which it did a couple of years ago? I mean in term of (--)

W: I didn't think much of it. I still don't. Uh, I don't think what's happening now is going to help the people in North Adams very much. [R: MoCA] As MoCA. No, they had planned that for a long time, moving out. [R: Uh huh] Uh, (--)

R: They just picked an opportune moment do you think, or?

W: Yeah, I'm sure they did.

R: A moment when it was (--)

W: As a matter of fact uh (--)

R: Actually it was the, it was the one year (--)

W: When we had the union, when we were involved, the ICW involved the union we had, well including the officers about forty-four hundred people. [R: Yeah] It wasn't long after that that we got out, that uh, [R: things started going down] they moved job after job after job out. We could foresee that. I knew that would happen.

R: Uh huh. Why do you think that was? [Repeats question] Why do you think that was?

W: Well there's several reasons. I'm only speculating now. We always had an unwritten agreement that if Sprague's moved jobs out of North Adams, which they did when they got out of the engineering stage, you know, out, flaws out of it, but they'd always replace it with a as good if not, or better place.

R: So they would do R&D here and move it out?

W: Yeah. Uh, and that worked over the years. After we got out things changed completely. Why or how they changed I don't know, but they changed dramatically after that.

R: Um, my job is built around this notion "The Changing Meaning of Work in Massachusetts" since the 1920's. Uh, I would like you to if you would, or could speculate for me a little bit how in your opinion has the meaning of work changed in North Adams since the 1920's?

W: Well going back, of course I'm not familiar too much with the 1920's.

R: Well wherever you can start being familiar is fine.

W: Well of course taking Sprague Electric everything, it became more sophisticated work all the year in and year out. Uh, it developed from almost nothing into a (--) Don't forget Sprague Electric was one of the top priority companies in the United States during the war [R: Yeah] who had one of the top priorities to get the stuff they needed. So that's how the job changed at Sprague's. I mean they came from, well as we know came from nothing [R: Umhm] uh, to a real sophisticated plant and jobs.

R: Did it, did it change in terms of your own life? Do you think work, the nature of work, or the meaning of work in your own life changed over, over the years?

W: Not particularly on the division that I was in. That was the most constant. We called it the FP's. Uh, and that was the early developed and the most consistent, staying much the same as it had been all the time. [Dryelectrolytics?] But other departments came from nothing into real like IBM departments and all. Where they wore robes and everything else to do the work.

R: Yeah, had to be very careful.

W: I mean really sophisticated work then. So it really came from like at Sprague's from nothing up through to that.

R: I'd like you to take a look at some of these pictures. Tell me if you know any of these people. All the pictures.

W: Oh sure. He's dead, she's dead. [R: Yeah] He's dead. That's his wife.

R: I like this one in the next one, because I contrast them. There's the people and the executives. See, martini glasses and beer bottles. [Both chuckles] Right?

W: Yeah, yeah. Julian Sprague. He was the head of the, he was president of the union once.

R: Who is he?

W: He's dead. Fitzpatrick. [R: Uh huh] He was an electman. He was one of the Head Engineers [R: Uh huh] with Sprague's. He's still around. Like Julian Sprague, he was the president of Sprague's at that time. [R: Uh huh] Did you know these?

R: No, I don't know them. [W: Oh] I don't know any of these people.

W: I don't know who he is.

R: You're the best one I've showed them to so far.

W: Now that's Julian Sprague. This is John [name unclear]. [Bernie?] Fitzpatrick. These are good pictures.

R: Yeah, aren't they. That's the [unclear] High School. That's Sundance.

W: Now these are good pictures. We had several meetings at Drury High School.

R: Uh huh, the union.

W: Oh course we went on strike at Sprague's shortly after.

R: That was 45? 45, 46?

W: Right, shortly after I got in.

R: Right, uh huh.

W: We had a long strike.

R: What do you think of the charge that the ICW was a company union?

W: Now that's ridiculous! If that's true every company, every union is. They all work inside the plants. Like when the IUE took over. That's why you get it, because you're working inside too. But the CIO does exactly the same thing. As a matter of fact the president of our union, Wood,

kept the same job as he was negotiating for CIO. That's a misnomer that goes back years. Every
(--)

R: I just wanted your, your point on view on the record. I wasn't trying to be uh (--)

W: No, they all do the same thing. CIO, AFofL, they all do the same thing. They all work in the company as long as you've got a contract. That's a good picture.

R: Yeah.

W: Joe O'Brien, he's dead. He was our superintendent. He was a superintendent, Mike Pierce. They just look familiar, most of them. I don't know these.

R: Do you know what year? I think it's the early 50's it looks like to me.

W: Yeah, Joe O'Brien. Pete Law. Mike Pierce. These are good pictures! [Long pause]

R: Do you have any pictures or other things from Sprague?

W: No. I have a lot of pictures of myself. I got sick of having pictures taken with the blood bank and not too much with Sprague's. These are good pictures!

R: Besides yourself was there anybody who was especially active and outspoken in the ICW that you can think of who is still alive? I'm putting a lot of conditions on this.

W: Louie Floriani.

R: Floriani, he's still around?

W: Yeah. [R: Uh huh] And uh, Andy [Canupko?].

R: Uh huh, yeah, okay.

W: They both live in North, one lives in Greylock and one lives in North Adams.

R: Uh huh. I would like to get people together to talk. And you certainly are our number one choice, but I wouldn't want to put a strain on your voice.

W: These are good pictures. He got killed.

R: That's the grand observ (--) That's the civil air patrol. Yeah that's, that's young, [W: He got killed in the airplane] Not long ago right. A year or (--)

W: Not last year, about a year ago wasn't it? [R: Yeah] A little over.

R: Being a little crazy as I understand.

W: He's with the National Aeronautics now in Washington. He was the vice-president of Sprague's. So that was, yeah that was his wife. They were divorced. [Unclear] Sprague.

R: Where is this? Do you have any idea where that is?

W: I'm looking there. I don't know. It's a smoking area anyway. It says up here.

R: Right. All of these are production people here.

W: Yes. Hm, where were you able to get all of these?

R: In the garbage areas.

W: Oh yeah.

R: Got them in the garbage in Marshall Street?

W: Oh yeah!

R: Yeah. [Chuckles]

W: He was quite a guy.

R: I'd love to interview him. Apparently he's not in good shape.

W: I don't know that he isn't. [Both speak at same time, both comments unclear]. They wanted him in the Eisenhower administration.

R: Yeah, yeah. [Still looking through pictures] I'd like to interview some people (--)

W: There's the brothers now.

R: Uh huh. I'd like to interview some people in supervision too. I haven't got anybody from supervision. [W: The what?] People who were in supervision, or even top management who are still around. Especially people who got layed off.

W: The ones I'm thinking of, I know the superintendents and all, but they didn't get layed off. [Unclear] Courtney Flanders.

R: Wood, they did a job on Wood. He was pretty bitter. [W: Hm?] They layed Wood off. Bob Wood, uh, Walt Wood.

W: Walt Wood. [R: Yeah] Well didn't he (--) When?

R: When they had the big lay off. When they just, when they shut down Marshall Street. And

he was in, he was in Management and they laid him off.

W: Yeah, he was with [Dear Dotty?] in personnel wasn't he?

R: Right, right. He was in personnel, right.

W: Yeah. [R: I've interviewed (--)] Well we never saw eye to eye very much. [R: Yeah]
What I didn't like is he was the president of our union, [R: right] ICW, when this all came about.

R: Umhm, umhm.

W: Boy now you are going back.

R: You know who this is? Nobody use to know to pick him out?

W: Yeah, he's um, what the devil was his name? Marty [Dennall?] He worked out of North Adams most of the time, he was in California and all. I'm sure that's who that is. He was a manager.

R: Uh huh. [Loud cough] Do you have any Sprague logs? [Repeats] Do you have any Sprague logs?

W: Have I? [R: Yeah] No.

R: I'm looking for them too.

W: This must be a Christmas party.

R: Why do you say that?

W: I don't know, why they're all lined up like that? It wouldn't be our lunch room.

R: Wouldn't it be decorated with Christmas decorations or something?

W: Yeah, I don't know what it would be here? There's something talking over here.

R: Some kind of banquet.

W: I'm thinking who (--)

R: You know who that is? [W: Hm?] You know who that is?

W: I don't know who it is. It looks like Volpy.

R: Governor Volpy? [W: Yeah] Maybe it is, I don't know.

W: I don't know! Could be too. Yeah, I know all of these people. He's still around. [R: Who is that?] [Aldo Evinselet?]

R: What did he do?

W: I'm not sure he's retired yet or not. He was a foreman. [R: Uh huh] Millbury, he went from Sprague's to General Cable. I think he's in [Grenich?], Connecticut now.

R: What did you like most Sprague's? [W: Hm?] What did you like most about Sprague's?

W: Being able to argue everyday I guess.

R: Uh huh, yeah.

W: I love to argue. That was a perfect place. [R: Uh huh] Perfect! He's still around. Ross, he was one of the top engineers.

R: You said you were uh, you were working for Treadway in Dearborn [W: Yeah] during the sit down strikes there, right?

W: We were the only place open.

R: What were your feelings about that then?

W: Well I wasn't the slightest bit (--) Well actually not a very slightest bit interested in the union at that point. You know,

R: But you weren't hostile to it necessarily? You were sort of indifferent to it.

W: No, I was (--) No, it didn't mean anything to me really. Uh, as a matter of fact we were the only, over at Dearborn Inn, that's where I was, we were the only place opened, only hotel opened. Every place else was closed.

R: Did they have (--) It was like a general strike huh?

W: Everything closed! [R: Uh huh] Everything closed! It was something. They tried to get Ford, which was right across the street almost from our Dearborn Inn. [R: Uh huh, right] They had to take a lumber truck and load it with lumber so that the help could only get in by single file. Normally they could go in fifty abreast. [R: Yeah] They tried their darndest to get Ford (--))

SIDE ONE OF TAPE ENDS. SIDE TWO BEGINS WITH WILLIAM IN MID-SENTENCE.

W: He lives down the Cape now. He was another engineer.

R: Right.

W: There were a lot of engineers.

R: That's a water cooled capacitor.

W: Umhm. Walt [last name unclear]. Girls party. Christmas. Boy it takes me back looking at some of these people.

R: Where do you (--) When you were active in the union, if the union didn't have a regular headquarters where did you keep your records? Did you have an office in the plant, or did you use your home, or ?

W: For the law books and all of the rest I had it here. [R: Uh huh] But then we got an office down on State Street in North Adams. [R: Umhm] But that didn't last long. Nobody would come there. [R: Uh huh] So we didn't keep that very often, much. Laddy kept the records, Laddy Morais.

R: Yes, very very good. But she wouldn't talk. She gave me the records, but she wouldn't talk to me. [W: Hm?] She gave me the records, but she wouldn't talk to me.

W: She wouldn't talk to you at all?

R: I wanted to, I wanted to tape her you know, and she was all, a little uh, I think she was self-conscious of something, you know?

W: Yeah. So she didn't do it at all?

R: She said she didn't feel she'd have anything to contribute, which is (--) a lot of times people feel that way, but it's not usually true.

W: There's that guy again, Marty Daneau. This was a plant manager of Brown Street, Fred Potter. [R: Uh huh]

R: I'm uh (--) You try to think about a good place to keep the records you know, and I think what, we'll probably make copies of them and put the originals in the University of Massachusetts in their archives and then put copies probably in the North Adams public library.

W: These are good pictures. Good pictures. That's the same one. Good pictures. I'll put these together for you. Wow! You got these all down at Marshall Street?

R: All down in Marshall Street. Yeah. I'm trying to get stuff (--) One of the things I want to do (--)

W: She was head of personnel, Marion Caron. [R: Who?] Marion Caron.

R: That's Marion Caron. [W: Yeah] Uh huh.

W: She was the director of employment for years and years and years. She went to Florida to live.

R: Who I'm talking to somebody. Marion Manion we got an interview with. She was in personnel for awhile. And then (--) [W: Who?] Marion Manion.

W: Oh, I think toward the end maybe. Marion Manion.

R: Yeah, and then somebody else. She had an Italian name, but then she got married.

W: What's her name was there for, gosh, she was there for forty years, fifty years. Marion, this one.

R: Bond. [W: Who?] Mrs. Bond? Gabby Bond?

W: She was the (--) For years she did all hiring.

R: I'm talking to Bob Diodati on Thursday.

W: Oh yeah, I just saw Bob the other day. [Long pauses as they look over the pictures] He was with the union before he went with management.

R: Right, right, he was with the office workers. [W: Yeah] Umhm.

W: Brings back memories these pictures. Jeese! Oh we had a lot of fun. We had a lot of fun. It was a good place to work. A lot of good people, nice people. Collectively, you couldn't ask for a better group in Sprague employees.

R: What were the issues of the strike in the forties after the war? Do you remember?

W: Yeah, well working conditions, but more importantly the pay scale and all and working conditions at that time. Nobody would take it as seriously, you know? [R: Uh huh] We did.

R: Did you recommend the strike, or uh, ?

W: Yeah.

R: Uh huh.

W: Well back in those days you're talking about the war, you had to be very careful [R: right] of how a strike took place.

R: Because of the no strike pledge, or?

W: Right. The people would just walk out if you authorize it that night. [R: Right] They tell you to authorize it, that's legal. [R: right] So there a lots of ways of doing it. [Long pause] So I'm surprised Laddy wouldn't.

R: I don't think she was hostile to it, you know? I think she was like a little embarrassed or something.

W: Probably nervous.

R: Yeah, yeah. She was quite nice to me actually.

W: She's a nice girl.

R: Yeah, very nice.

W: Very nice girl.

R: She talked to me a lot. It was really frustrating, because I wanted to have it on tape, you know? Why don't you shut up and let me turn the tape recorder on, you know? She didn't let me. [Laughs] But she was concerned about the you know, the legal status of the papers and stuff like that. You know, what could be done with them and stuff, because I want, you know my primary concern is I think they're very valuable. She took very very good notes.

W: Oh yeah she did.

R: And uh, they should be available for scholars now, people who are interested in the history of unions and stuff. Should be, they should be available to them.

W: Oh she took good minutes. She was with us for years.

R: She said Wood wanted to cut her pay that's why she uh (--)

W: Well she went with them I think.

R: Yeah, yeah, but then she left. The reason she stopped is because Wood wanted to cut her pay.

W: Oh yeah?

R: He was going to pay her less for taking down those notes. [Laughs]

W: We didn't pay much attention to each other after. Of course I couldn't talk so it didn't make much difference. Uh, I went for almost a year without a voice.

R: Uh huh. And he had, what, was he like (--)

W: So then I resigned. He was president.

R: Did he run against you, or defeat you, or just you chose not to run and he ran?

W: No, I had just won the election. I didn't (--) No, I couldn't talk.

R: Uh huh, and then you resigned.

W: So I resigned.

R: Uh huh and then he took over.

W: Yeah. Well no, he had been, he was the president, but he was also interested in the IUE. [R: Yeah] So he was sitting in dual seats. [R: Uh huh] So when he saw the opportunity of course he took advantage of it and did. [R: Uh huh] There was nothing I could do about it because I couldn't talk or argue. They had meetings and everything else. Mass meetings you know? When this was coming down the wire!

R: Yes, yes. [W: But I couldn't (--)] Well as a matter of fact some of that is in those records.

W: I couldn't even go. Hm?

R: Some of that is in Laddy's records.

W: Yeah, but I couldn't even go to the meetings. [R: Yeah] So I resigned. I was chairman then.

R: Uh huh. Well your information is really be invaluable to me. Um, as I said I'm sort of boxing around getting information. I'm especially interested in, was, I was especially interested in the history of the ICW from your point of view. I'm also very interested in Marshall Street. I've gone back. I've talk to some people she worked in Marshall Street when it was still Arnold Print Works, as far back as 1933.

W: It was a dilapidated place then, Arnold Print Works. [R: Uh huh] Boy, Sprague's had to spend millions on new floors, ceilings.

R: Uh huh, just to pull it together.

W: They let it down. They're probably claiming it on income taxes to keep up the building, but they didn't keep up anything. It was awful.

R: And uh, one of the things that I want to do is uh, I want to talk to all of the union leaders that I can get to, past and present. As I said, I talked to Ray Bass, I talked to Boulger. Wood, I don't know if he's going to talk to me or not. That's a problem. But I'm very pleased to have been able to speak to you. Um, is there anything in terms of the kind of issues that I've raised, or anything like that that you'd like to add that comes to mind that you would like to talk about?

W: Um, no, not anything in particular I don't think. [R: Umhm] Uh, oh I enjoyed it there because like I say, if you like to argue be in a union, that's the place to argue. And I always like to argue so I was right at home. [R: Uh huh, uh huh] So I enjoyed it.

R: Umhm. Okay, well thank you very much. One of the things I'm going to do, you mentioned these names of people that, they're on the tape, but I want to write them down so I make sure I know where to get a hold of people, but I can do that off the tape.

TAPE ONE SIDE TWO ENDS